DREXEL UNIVERSITY THOMAS R. KLINE SCHOOL OF LAW

LAW 669S – Legal Decision Technology
Spring 2015

SYLLABUS

Prof. Michael Poulshock

COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Class Meetings:	Wednesday, 9:00-12:00, Room 230
Phone and E-mail:	(609) 902-1110, michael.poulshock@drexel.edu
Office Hours:	By appointment
Required Texts:	None
Other Materials:	Oracle Policy Modeling (see the section on Software Installation below). Students will also be required to download the articles and electronic media listed in the Course Calendar below.
TWEN/Blackboard Information:	None
Course Category:	None

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

This course explores how legal decision technology can be used to expand public access to legal information. Students will learn about cutting edge legal decision technologies, hone their statutory interpretation skills, and build interactive apps that answer specific legal questions. This is a hands on, lab-style class, but no prior programming experience is required.

Instruction will center upon a software product call Oracle Policy Modeling (OPM), which is part of the Oracle Policy Automation product suite. OPM is a business rule engine that allows enterprises to express legal and policy rules in natural language, such as English, and then build them into information technology systems. OPM was designed to capture logical rules typically found in statutes, regulations, and policy manuals. It's meant to be used by people without a technical background, and yet it has some very sophisticated features. As such, it's an ideal tool for beginning to understand technology's potential for making the law more efficient and accessible to average citizens.

Exploring OPM as a legal decision technology will give us a foundation for considering a range of connected topics. We'll discuss: how technology is (and is not) changing the legal profession; the complexity of the law and whether anything can be done about it; the potential for legal decision technology to change the way people interact with the law; best practices for building rule-based systems; and the ethical implications and constraints facing these technologies.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Build legal rule projects using the Oracle Policy Modeling software;

2. Understand how to create logical models of statutes and regulations; and

3. Appreciate the social and ethical issues related to legal decision technologies.

GRADING:

Students will receive a letter grade based upon class participation and a final project. There will be no final exam in this course.

1. **Class participation** (40%) – This entails things such as participating in discussions, completing the in-class exercises, asking questions, helping fellow students, and showing up.

2. **Final project** (60%) – This will be an OPM project that demonstrates a mastery of the skills and best practices taught throughout the course. Students will select their own topic, which will be based on statutory, regulatory, or case law rules (or some combination thereof), based on the law of any jurisdiction. Students will present their projects during the final class, possibly to a panel of illustrious judges. A description of the project grading criteria will be provided in advance, so there will be no mystery about how grades are determined.

Extra credit will be given for the solution of "puzzlers" that will be given out in a random and unpredictable manner.

Grading scale and distribution policies can be found in the most recent Student Handbook.

CLASS MECHANICS:

Classes will generally be organized as follows. For approximately the first half hour of every class, we will discuss the assigned readings and other materials (see below). These materials are freely available on the Internet or through your student subscriptions to Lexis or Westlaw.

The rest of the class will revolve around the Oracle Policy Modeling software and will follow a "lab" format. First, I will explain the background behind the new skills that we're going to learn, and give examples of how to perform that skill. Students will then be given a series of exercises to practice that skill, to master it, and ultimately to combine it with the skills they have already learned. These exercises will increase in difficulty at a rate continuously adjusted to make things challenging but not (too) frustrating.

I want to reiterate that absolutely no programming background is necessary, even though this course may seem like some kind of programming class. I've taught this course to hundreds of people and I guarantee that if you're willing to put in the effort, I will make sure that you master all of the hands-on material.

Aside from the reading assignments, for the beginning of the course the only homework will be to practice any OPM skills that you need to brush up on from the previous class. Later in the semester, homework will include the creation of your final class project.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Regular and prompt attendance is required in all courses. In accordance with ABA standards, students shall be permitted absences up to, but not exceeding 20% of the regularly scheduled classes in any course. Any student who fails to comply with law school attendance policies in a given course may be withdrawn from that course.

Since this course involves hands-on instruction in the Oracle Policy Modeling software, missing a class will probably result in the student lacking some foundational knowledge necessary for later classes. Students are therefore encouraged not to miss a class. If events render that unavoidable, students should work with each other and with me to catch up.

SOFTWARE INSTALLATION:

Students will need to download Oracle Policy Modeling (part of Oracle Policy Automation version 10.4.5), available for free at http://www.oracle.com/technetwork/apps-tech/policy-automation/downloads/index.html. This software requires Windows Vista or later and Microsoft Word/Excel 2003 or later. Students must bring a laptop with this software installed to each class.

Students who use Mac laptops can run OPM by installing Boot Camp, and Apple software product that creates a hard drive partition in which Windows programs can run.

Microsoft Office is available for free to Drexel students at:
http://products.office.com/en-us/student/office-in-education.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Please refer to the Student Handbook for the Kline School of Law Code of Conduct, which includes the school's policies on plagiarism, cheating, and other matters.

COURSE DROP/WITHDRAWAL:

Upper-level students will be permitted to add or drop classes online through the first week of the semester. To add or drop a course after the first week of the semester, students must obtain permission from the Director of Student Advising, and requests will only be granted for good cause. Dropping a course following the second week of the semester is considered a Withdrawal and a grade of 'W' will be recorded on the transcript, unless exceptional circumstances are found by the Director of Student Advising. Other policies may apply to courses that do not start at the beginning of the semester.

DISABILITY:

Students with disabilities requesting classroom accommodations and services at Drexel University need to present a current accommodation verification letter (AVL) to their instructors. Students with disabilities requesting exam accommodations and services need to obtain an AVL and present it to Prof. Clare Coleman, Director of Student Advising, in the Office of Student Affairs Room 452. AVLs are issued by the Office of Disability Resources (ODR). For additional information, contact Prof. Clare Coleman or contact ODR at www.drexel.edu/ODR, 3201 Arch St., Suite 210, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 895-1401 (V), or (215) 895-2299 (TTY). Individual professors do not have the discretion to accommodate disabilities absent an AVL letter from ODR. The university does not grant retroactive disability accommodations.

The OPM software uses red and green colors to distinguish different types of data. If you are colorblind, please let me know I will help you find a way to make this differentiation on some basis other than color.

ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC POLICIES:

Other academic policies can be found in the most recent Student Handbook.

COURSE CALENDAR:

This course calendar is tentative and will be updated. I will notify you when that happens.

#	Date	Readings to be discussed	Lab topics
1	Jan. 14	None	Course introduction, demo, and software setup
2	Jan. 21	Marc Andreeseen, Why Software is Eating the World (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 20, 2011) (Lexis/Westlaw) Richard Susskind, The Future of Artificial Intelligence and Law (video) (2014)	Writing Boolean rules
3	Jan. 28	Oracle Corp., Is OPA a Good Fit for My Business? (2014)	Performing calculations
4	Feb. 4	Peter Schuck, Legal Complexity: Some Causes, Consequences, and Cures (1992)	Using date and text variables
5	Feb. 11	Andrew Stumpff Morrison, The Law is a Fractal: The Attempt to Anticipate Everything (2013)	Defining tabular rules
6	Feb. 18	United Kingdom, UK Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act (2012); Joanne Irene Gabrynowicz, Positive Law Codification of Space Programs (2011)	Modeling data with entities
7	Feb. 25	Webster v. LegalZoom, Class Action Settlement Agreement (2010); Section 81.101 of the Texas Government Code	Modeling data with entities
8	Mar. 4	Jacoby & Meyers v. Supreme Court of New Jersey, Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief (2011)	Time-based reasoning
	Mar. 11	[Class cancelled]	
	Mar. 18	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
9	Mar. 25	Danielle Keats Citron, Technological Due Process (2008)	Time-based reasoning
10	Apr. 1	Chrissy Burns, Online Legal Services: A Revolution that Failed?, ch. 6 & 13 (2007)	Unit testing and creating web-based interviews
11	Apr. 8	Bench-Capon & Coenen, Isomorphism and Legal Knowledge Based Systems (1991)	Modeling complex regulations
12	Apr. 15	Lisa Shay, et al, Do Robots Dream of Electric Laws? (2013)	Preparing final projects
13	Apr. 20 (9-12, Room 250)	Jasmine Lee, OPA Best Practice Guide for Rule Developers (2013); Jasmine Lee, Tips for Polishing Your OPA Rulebase (2014)	Preparing final projects
14	Apr. 22		Presentation of projects

FINAL PROJECT:

This section describes the expectations and grading criteria for the final course project. As mentioned above, this project constitutes 60% of the final grade for the course.

Timeline

February 18	Propose initial project concepts
March 4	Finalize project goals and scope
March 11	Finalize identification and scoping of source material
Mar-Apr	Work on projects outside of class
April 15	In-class preparation of final projects
April 22	Project presentations, possibly to an esteemed panel of judges and the larger law school community

General grading criteria

1. Appropriate selection of topic
    a. Should answer one or more legal questions
    b. Based on legal source material (of any jurisdiction)
    c. Appropriate size (minimum 20 pages of legal rules)
2. Use of full range of techniques learned in class
    a. All attribute types
    b. All rule types: Boolean, calculation, conditional (rule tables)
    c. Entities
    d. Time-based reasoning
    e. Interviews
    f. Unit tests illustrating common scenarios
3. Use of rulebase "best practices"
    a. Appropriately worded attributes and entities
    b. Readable rules
    c. Isomorphic rules
    d. Traceability to source material
    e. Cleanly-factored rulebase design
    f. User-friendly interview experience